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AUTHOR	Donelson, Kenneth L., Ed.
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ABSTRACT

Practical advice is provided by Arizona high School English teachers on such areas of media usage as lettering for media projects, hints on movie-making, uses for instamatic cameras and slides, and the use of media for units on propaganda, oral communication, and composition. (MF)

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SHOPTALK: A Column of Brief Ideas and Sundry Thoughts about Media and Teaching English

Pat Faux (McKemy School) suggests that comic strips in which there are about two characters speaking can make good material to review punctuation of conversation with students. Each student is given a comic strip and is directed to write a brief narrative using the dialogue and action in the comic strip. The student must punctuate direct quotations correctly. These narratives could be the basis for scripts for either tape-slide presentations or film-making.

Kathryn Whalen (Park School, Madison District) makes the following recommendations for storing slides: (1) Those boxes containing personalized checks make excellent storage boxes for slides since they can be divided into sections and the slides stored up-right; (2) a gift jewelry box, especially the long kind used for necklaces, holds many slides, although slides cannot be stored up-right. Mrs. Whalen recommends the use of a thick layer of willhold glue over a picture and its cardboard mount for a striking, clear and durable finish. She says that this is especially effective for mounting pictures or maps to wood. Allow plenty of time for drying before moving the finished product.

Brother Bonaventure Neidlinger (St. John's Indian School, Laveen) recommends keeping a small bottle of Ditto fluid handy in the classroom, especially when you use wax pencils for writing on acetate for your overhead projector. Ditto fluid is an excellent solvent, and the alcohol dries rapidly without leaving streaks on the transparencies. This fluid is also handy for wiping off carbon smudges on your hands.

Charlotte Schilt (Tempe HS) notes that when a teacher has to be absent from his class and he knows that in advance he could tape-record his instructions for assignments before leaving. The tape-recording makes everything less traumatic for the students (and also for the substitute teacher) and it should clarify precisely what the assignment demands. The teacher would be more confident that the class knows what is expected, and it might check on the clarity of the assignment, particularly if the teacher involved listened to his own set of directions. How often do teachers really attempt to analyze the set of instructions they give to their classes?

Vivian Tilford (Chandler HS) uses a technique she calls the "Propaganda Pad". Students are asked to bring a drawing pad of newsprint large enough to mount advertisements from LIFE or LOOK or other picture magazines. On each page of this pad students paste ads and label the propaganda techniques they recognize. Lists and definitions of these techniques were dittoed and distributed to students for reference. This activity was successful for almost a week.

Carol Barclay (Navajo School, Scottsdale) warns readers of two things they should remember in working with A-V materials. (1) As soon as you produce an original tape (audio or video) make a duplicate--and thus avoid the anguish that overcomes you when an original is accidentally erased. (2) Storing overhead transparencies? Remember-transparency film continues to develop in heat, so store in a cool place. And slip a blank sheet of paper between transparencies to prevent a film from printing on the one below it.

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Jesse Hise (Central HS) reminds us that the time spent in lettering--often a painstaking chore with a media project--can be shortened in many ways. For bulletin boards, cut letters free hand. Attempt unusual shapes that are legible but different. Students will appreciate a "new look" and the teacher saves much valuable time from the trace and cut-out method. For transparencies, consider using rub-on letters, which can be applied to the master more quickly than pen lettering with india ink. Typewriters are also available fitted with special large type for use in preparing transparency masters (Primary type).

Nancy Cromer (Tempe HS) gives some important tips on improving quality in making movies:

1. Select interesting surroundings for shots.
2. Use Agfachrome film for more professional-looking color.
3. Shoot outdoor film during early morning or late afternoon.
4. Use zoom shots sparingly.
5. Panning should be done slowly and sparingly.
6. Use tripod whenever possible.
7. Use unusual viewpoints--closeup, through a window, through holes in crowds, unusual angles, etc.
8. Use back lighting as well as front lighting for indoor shots.
9. Use actors with interesting features.
10. Use makeup and costumes where necessary.
11. Use good quality commercially recorded sounds for sound tracks.
12. Professional-looking movies are easier to get with black and white film.
13. Most splicers make the splice in the middle of the frame. Adapting the splicer to make the splice between frames makes the splice less noticeable when showing the film.

Using an instamatic camera, flash bulbs, and slide film Pat Faux (McKemy School) has her students take pictures of other students participating in English class activities. Students could be snapped while making a movie, taking pictures with a 35mm camera, giving a speech, doing creative dramatics, or doing any of the many other interesting things that are done in English class. These slides can be used along with music as a first-day preview for a new English class or they can be presented to parents on school visitation nights or to other English teachers. Students and the general public need to find out that English isn't all that dull.

Teaching students how propaganda affects them can become literally a "live" subject by letting the students do the teaching, says Emmett Smith (Cortez HS, Glendale). After discussing and illustrating various propaganda devices, the teacher can assign students to prepare presentations which emphasize at least one element and example of propaganda. With media and props and costumes and a video-tape camera, both teacher and students can add quality, depth, and enjoyment to the assignment.

Lavern Coffey (Alhambra HS, Phoenix) recommends the use of a type of "set-theory" for teaching organization in writing. Through slides, the teacher can show different examples of things and ask the students to define various sets these things could fall into. For example, the teacher could show slides (easily made by him) of various buildings--schools, government buildings, churches, houses, business, etc.--and then ask his students to explore the various sets these buildings might fall into (by color, by use, by architecture, by age, by location in Phoenix, by size, etc.), all in an effort to

show how many different ways a topic can be organized and in an effort to point out how important organization is (depending on the purpose of the writer, the audience, the time, the place, etc.).

Another approach to teaching organization through media is one by Nancy Cromer (Tempe HS) who uses films. The teacher must preview the film in question to find its organizational pattern. One possibility is to let students watch the whole film and then discuss the organization; or the projector can be stopped at appropriate places during the film showing and the organization discussed. Another possibility, one that is especially helpful for slower students, is to have a prepared ditto of the main structural divisions of the film and let the students fill in details under each. Through the use of films, interesting information can be used to teach organization.

Sue Hardesty (Chandler HS) and Nell Ward (West HS, Phoenix) remind readers that if their schools lack a dry mount press (and every school ought to purchase this necessary tool) lifts can be made from a pressure process rather than the heat process. Although the finished product will be a little more expensive using this laminating material (called PLASTIK SEAL), it will look much better and will last much longer. Both Miss Hardesty and Mrs. Ward also remind readers to save the pictures used to make slides since the original pictures can be laminated and mounted. They make excellent bulletin board displays and are useful in review or tests in conjunction with the slides.

Jim Reith (Scottsdale HS) asks readers if they are tired of cutting out all those letters for bulletin board mounting. He recommends for lettering that will attract students that teachers and students collect all those old campaign posters for student body elections. Then cut out the individual letters (or cut out irregularly shaped pieces of the poster, each containing one letter). Soon you will have a large stock of letters which will enable you to make up exciting and colorful bulletin boards quickly. The variety of texture and form and color and size of these letters should offer a pleasant alternative to the monochromatic and usually dull bulletin boards.

Descriptive writing with music can be fun, urges Al Bradshaw (Mesa HS). Try having a class write a description of a scene depicted in music like NIGHT ON BARE MOUNTAIN or the storm scene from GRAND CANYON SUITE (Walt Disney's film using Grofe's music is readily available) or parts of the 1812 OVERTURE or THE AFTERNOON OF A FAUN or any music by Delius. Results of the students writing descriptions to fit music may startle and please you.

Brother Bonaventure Neidlinger (St. John's Indian School, Laveen) reminds us that having a roll of Kleenex paper towels in your classroom will save lots of time and work. They are excellent for a quick dusting job, and they prove very gentle for cleaning the stage and lenses of your overhead projector. Be sure, however, to stick to Kleenex. They will prove to be the most absorbent as well as the gentlest for cleaning lenses.

Vivian Tilford (Chandler HS) suggests that if you have any used 8mm or 16mm film that you no longer want, let students remove the emulsion in soapy water and add color with a felt marker. You can then project it while you play some appropriate music or read modern poetry that fits. It might be fun to show the experimental film and ask students to recommend music or literature that would fit the mood established by the film.

Most teachers have at one time or another tried to use pictures for descriptive writing or for some other composition exercise. Nancy Cromer (Tempe HS) reminds us that pictures are usually too small for use with an entire class. Use slides instead. With the light from the slide projector and other light around the window curtains, the room is usually bright enough for student writing, and they might even welcome the change of a dimly lit room. From pictures of all sorts (even vacation shots you've taken) assignments could be created for descriptive writing, for narrative story sequences, for organization of the many pictures into sets, all through the use of slides.

Some of the most profitable sessions in the Summer EPDA Media Institute were brainstorming sessions when faculty and participants exchanged ideas on teaching content and techniques with media. Listed below are just a few of the ideas that came out of two sessions, June 23 and 24, 1969.

Aesthetic or sense response of person to sound made when uttering word in addition to knowing symbol or what word means. Many people do this without knowing they are responding to sound as well as the meaning. (Person can experience a psychological wipe-out before he gets to meaning of word.) Possible presentation--make sound, then show visual. Begin with sound that is not a word but is similar to a word. Sound could gradually change to the word and then change back to just the sound. (This could possibly let the person experience his response to sound separate from symbolic meaning of word.)

"Pretty sounding words" shown with a variety of visual (slides, films, transparencies). "Pretty sounding" foreign words could be shown with a picture of what word means. Show visual of attractive scene, person, or object and accompany picture with a variety of sounds or voices (this can show the influence of sound on visual).

Animal communication. Work up presentation to study the way in which animals communicate feelings or needs. Sally Charrighar--good article on sex communication of animals.

Non-verbal communication. Collection through media of non-verbal communication. Teacher could begin with an overview of several non-verbal communications to strike up interest and then involve students in searching for and collecting non-verbal communications. (Each new one is added to the collection and presented to the class.)

Interview, audition, or try-out of any kind (any time one has to present or "sell" himself). Person could film an actual interview or audition, say for three minutes, and then work that footage into a presentation explaining and interpreting what is happening in the interview. Other important factors could be worked into total presentation such as (1) the interviewer.

Media dictionary. Instead of the usual written textbook-like dictionary, words and definitions would be presented through a variety of media.

Word usage. Show through media a variety of visuals (or pictures) and a variety of words. Then have students match words with visuals. This is to study what words seem to be most prominently in use and the association with pictures will give more information on how the words are being used. Words could be presented to the students either in spoken or written form.

Animal communication. A study of sounds animals make in different cultures or countries with different languages in order to study sounds people make to mimic animals. What does this have to do with sound discrimination or with the structure of the language? This could be expanded beyond just the study of mimicry of animals, to include other natural sounds such as wind, water, etc.

Video-tape commercials (or bring TV into classroom) to study how commercials use language. Could get discarded tape from editing in order to determine why they used the parts they did use.

How could media be used to implement vocabulary in order for students to choose better nouns and verbs instead of using adjectives and adverbs as crutches? A presentation could be used to emphasize an author who is able to use words without adjective and adverb crutches. Same literature could be shown with words changed so that adjectives and adverbs are necessary. Study the quality of each.

Study of stereotypes. How are stereotypes used in films, television, etc. to develop peoples' attitudes? Do film makers invent the non-verbal communication through association with the situation in the film, or does he only use the attitudes that exist? This presentation could be designed to help keep students from being manipulated, such as in commercials.

The communication of legs!
An interesting study in composition. Film footage and extra slides left over after editing could be presented to students as a challenge to create and compose a finished work.

Study of a story presented in different kinds of media, such as film, novel. Or a story could be presented through sound only--radio or tape. Several things could be studied, such as visual discrimination, sound discrimination, reading ability, etc. Teacher could discover which approach appeals most to students and use it as a take-off place to gradually work in using other media.